

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DAMASC 01904 051520Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 PPT-01 CA-01 SCS-06 L-03
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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO AMCONSUL ADANA
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E.O. 11652: NA
TAGS: PBOR, CASC, CVIS, TU, SY
SUBJ: REPORTED SHAKEDOWN AT SYRIAN BORDER

REF: ADANA 72 NOTAL

1. FEE FOR 15 DAY VISA IS 26 SYRIAN POUNDS. IF TRAVELERS
LEAVE WITHIN 15 DAYS THERE IS NO FEE FOR EXIT VISA. THERE
IS ADDITIONAL FEE OF ABOUT 55 DOLLARS FOR CLEARANCE FORMALITIES
FOR FOREIGN BUSES. ONLY OTHER CUSTOM FEE WOULD BE FOR
DUTIES ON ITEMS IN EXCESS OF DUTY-FREE ALLOWANCES. WE KNOW OF
NO ADDITIONAL FEE FOR VISAING PASSPORTS WHICH ARE VALID FOR
INTENDED PERIOD OF STAY. SOMETIMES IMMIGRATION WILL GIVE
ONLY THREE DAY ENTRIES ON ABOUT TO EXPIRE PASSPORTS, ASKING
TRAVELER TO OBTAIN NEW PASSPORT FOR VISA EXTENSION. NORMAL
FEE OF 26 SYRIAN POUNDS IS CHARGED.

2. REPORTS OF BRIBE-TAKING AT SYRIAN BORDERS ARE
RECEIVED HERE FROM TIME TO TIME BUT NOT TO EXTENT REPORTED
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REFTEL. MOST SUCH SHAKEDOWNS ARE PAID BY TRAVELERS THROUGH
THEIR TAXI DRIVERS FOR EXPEDITIOUS CLEARANCE. THE AMOUNTS
USUALLY NOT LARGE. REASONS GENERALLY GIVEN FOR SUCH
BEHAVIOR ARE THAT SYRIAN CUSTOMS AND IMMIGRATION OFFICIALS
ARE NOTORIOUSLY UNDERPAID AND POORLY SUPERVISED.

3. CHARGE DISCUSSED QUESTION INFORMALLY WITH FOREIGN

MINISTRY DIRECTOR OF AMERICAN AFFAIRS APRIL 4. FOREIGN
MINISTRY OFFICIAL ASKED FOR AIDE MEMOIRE ON INCIDENT WHICH
WE PROVIDED AND PROMISED TO DO WHAT HE COULD TO PREVENT ITS
RECURRENCE.

4. IT IS NOT CLEAR FROM REFTEL WHETHER GROUP HAD SYRIAN
VISAS IN THEIR PASSPORTS OR WHERE THEY ACQUIRED THEM. IN
FUTURE REPORTING OF SUCH INCIDENTS THIS INFORMATION WOULD
BE USEFUL AS WELL AS NAMES OF PASSENGERS, LICENSE NUMBER
OF BUS, NAME OF TOUR COMPANY, AND ANY OTHER DETAILS WHICH
COULD HELP SYRIAN AUTHORITIES IDENTIFY THOSE PARTICULAR
OFFICIALS INVOLVED IN SHAKEDOWN INCIDENTS. WE HOPE
SITUATION WILL IMPROVE IN FUTURE.

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